

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 2706

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EXDIS

FOR CEN DIRECTOR DAVID LAZAR ONLY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, CS

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION WITH DR. BURSTIN ABOUT HIS

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH CEN

DIRECTOR

REF: BELIEZE; SAN JOSE 2637; SAN JOSE 2653

1. DURING ONE-HOUR CONVERSATION WITH LUIS BURSTIN ON JUNE 27, EMBOFF TOLD HIM THAT THE AMBASSADOR WAS DEEPLY DISTURBED OVER THE WAY CEN DIRECTOR DAVID LAZAR'S CONVERSATION WAS REFLECTED IN BURSTIN'S MEMORANDUM OF THEIR CONVERSATION. EMBOFF POINTED OUT THAT IN THE VERSION OF THE CONVERSATION BASED UPON LAZAR'S NOTES LEFT WITH THE EMBASSY THERE WAS ONLY SLIGHT REFERENCE TO THE SORRY ECONOMIC STATE OF THE COUNTRY EVEN THOUGH BURSTIN'S MEMORANDUM FOCUSES AHJLENGTH ON THAT THEME. EMBOFF SAID THE SECOND POINT THAT WAS HIGHLY DISTURBING WAS THE REFLECTION OF LAZAR MENTIONING A POSSIBLE "ARMED INTERVENTION" IF EVENTS IN COSTA RICA INDICATED AN INTERRUPTION OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS WAS ABOUT TO OCCUR.

2. BURSTIN READ FROM LAZAR MEMCON AND OBSERVED

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THAT WITH A COUPLE OF MINOR EXCEPTIONS THE VERSION

WAS CORRECT AS WRITTEN, BUT NOTED THE OMISSION OF THE DISCUSSION OF THE CRITICAL ECONOMIC SITUATION THAT IS JUST OVER THE HORIZON--SIX MONTHS AWAY. BURSTIN CALLED IN HIS WIFE MARI SHORTLY AFTER CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF BEGAN AND ASKED HER TO PROVIDE HER VERSION ON BOTH THE POINTS MENTIONED. MARI RECITED THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF WHAT SHE SAID WAS A LENGTHY DISCUSSION WITH LAZAR OF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION AND CONFIRMED HER HUSBAND'S REPORT THAT "ARMED INTERVENTION" BY THE U.S. WAS A POSSIBILITY FORESEEN BY LAZAR IN THE EVENT OF A THREAT TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER.

3. EMBOFF STATED THAT HE WAS IN A POOR POSITION AS A NON-PARTICIPANT TO ARGUE WITH A PARTICIPANT IN THE CONVERSATION OVER WHAT WAS SAID OR NOT SAID ABOUT THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DETERIORATION OF THE COUNTRY OR ABOUT PRESIDENT ODUBER'S FUNCTIONAL QUALITIES IN OFFICE, BUT EMBOFF WAS SURE THAT THIS EMBASSY WOULD NOT EVEN CONSIDER RECOMMENDING ARMED INTERVENTION AS AN ALTERNATIVE U.S. POLICY IN THIS DAY AND AGE. EMBOFF EXPLAINED THAT LAZAR WAS UNDOUBTEDLY REFERRING TO THE POSSIBILITY OF DIPLOMATIC INTERVENTION THAT WOULD BE INTENDED TO DISSUADE ANYONE FROM UNDERTAKING A RASH MOVE THAT WOULD ENDANGER COSTA RICA'S INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION AS A TRADITIONAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC.

4. BURSTIN NOTED THAT HE APPRECIATED THE DANGER IMPLICIT IN HIS MEMCON WITH LAZAR FOR THE POTENTIAL DAMAGE IT COULD DO TO U.S./COSTA RICAN RELATIONS. HE ASSURED EMBOFF THAT NO ONE OTHER THAN FIGUERES WOULD EVER SEE THE MEMCON. HE OFFERED TO CALL FIGUERES RIGHT AWAY TO INFORM HIM OF OUR CONCERNS. EMBOFF TOLD HIM THAT SUCH A CALL WOULD NOT BE NECESSARY AS THE AMBASSADOR WOULD BE TAKING UP THE SAME POINTS WITH EX-PRESIDENT FIGUERES ON JULY 29. (BURSTIN CALLED HIM ANYWAY.)

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